

Digital Public Relations: Trend and Required Skills

Kehumasan Digital: Tren dan Kompetensi yang Dibutuhkan

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Abstract

Public Relations have evolved adjusting its practices to fulfill the needs of its users. In this case, technology possesses a great influence on how PR operates and interacts within society. Various institutions move to digital Public Relations, relying heavily on digital platforms, forcing Public Relations practitioners to master a new set of skills. This research aimed to map digital public relations trends and investigate the digital public relations competencies needed. A number of public relations practitioners from various institutions were interviewed to meet the objectives. A qualitative descriptive approach was used to answer the research questions. The research found that today traditional and digital public relations work synergically and are still needed by organizations. Apart from having good communication, interpersonal, writing, analytical thinking, and soft skills, a public relations practitioner is expected to be familiar with the digital platform and have the ability to design digital content.

Keywords: Digital; Public relations; Skills; Trend

Abstrak

Public Relations telah berevolusi menyesuaikan praktiknya untuk memenuhi kebutuhan pengguna. Dalam hal ini, teknologi memiliki pengaruh besar terhadap bagaimana PR beroperasi dan berinteraksi dalam masyarakat. Berbagai institusi beralih ke PR digital yang sangat mengandalkan platform digital. Hal ini memaksa praktisi PR untuk menguasai serangkaian keterampilan baru. Untuk itu, perguruan tinggi harus menyesuaikan diri dalam mempersiapkan para praktisi PR di masa depan agar lebih memahami bidang yang akan mereka hadapi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memetakan tren PR digital dan menyelidiki kompetensi PR digital yang dibutuhkan. Sejumlah praktisi PR dari berbagai lembaga diwawancarai untuk memenuhi tujuan tersebut. Pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif kemudian digunakan untuk menjawab rumusan masalah. Dari penelitian ini, diketahui bahwa saat ini public relations tradisional dan digital bekerja secara sinergis dan masih dibutuhkan oleh organisasi. Selain memiliki keterampilan komunikasi yang baik, kemampuan interpersonal, menulis, berfikir analitis dan soft skill, seorang praktisi humas diharapkan familiar dengan platform digital beserta fitur-fiturnya dan memiliki kemampuan membuat konten digital.

Kata Kunci: Digital; Kehumasan; Keterampilan; Tren

Introduction

Throughout the years, Public Relations have adapted and evolved following phenomena to cater to the needs of its users. In this case, technological advances have a major impact on how Public Relations operates and interacts within society. Both big and small institutions have opted to resort to digital Public Relations, which relies heavily on digital platforms. Either utilizing the reliability of websites or the rapid engagement of microblogs, Public Relations practitioners require a new and ever-changing set of skills to succeed in their area of expertise. For this reason, higher educational institutions in the Public Relations area have to adjust accordingly in training their future Public Relations practitioners to understand better the field with which they are about to deal.

To begin with, there are many definitions that explain what Public Relations is. One of them defines Public Relations as the practice of managing the distribution of information between an individual or an organization (such as a business, government, agency, or non-profit organization) and the public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Institute of Public Relations (IPR) also defined PR as all efforts that are carried out in a planned and sustainable manner to create and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public (Jefkins, 2003). However, the correct definition of Public Relations in the days of Artificial Intelligence (AI), as it is today, is the definition of Public Relations by The Chartered Institute of Public Relations, which says, “PR is about reputation - the results of what you do, what you say, and what other people say about you” (Arief, 2019). This definition is considered the most relevant because currently, almost all information that is spread is recorded in big digital data that can be accessed by anyone who needs it.

Public Relations carry out an important task in an organization. Public relations include all types of communication that occur between organizations and the public (Mahendra, 2020). In detail, Harlow presented the various roles of Public Relations in an organization include: controlling and being involved in the conceptual and operational processes of communication between the organization and the public; participating in problem and/or issue management; helping management to stay responsive and updated on public opinion; being able to define and emphasize management’s responsibility to serve the public interest; and helping management to follow and utilize change effectively in relation to trend anticipation (Cutlip, Broom, & C., 2009). To carry out this role, Public Relations should use research as well as healthy communication as the main means of implementation.

Public Relations has also undergone an evolution from the traditional era to the digital era. This evolution occurs in public relations’ roles, functions, and tasks from the 1.0 to 4.0 era (Arief, 2019). Public Relations 1.0 is the era of traditional PR. In this era, printed media has become a mainstay in the distribution of information. This requires Public Relations to monitor ten printed media every day. The form of communication in the era of Public Relations 1.0 is a one-way (vertical) communication from one source to many targets (one to many) so that Public Relations activities can be described as broadcaster-like. Furthermore, Public Relations 2.0 is the era of the birth of online media. In this era, the form of Public Relations communication is horizontal communication or interconnected (many to many). In this era, Public Relations acts as a liaison. This era was marked by the beginning of the transition of printed media (news) to digital platforms. Public Relations 3.0 is an era in which social media was born. Social media is the media most used, most liked, and most trusted by the public. Citizen

journalism, corporate journalism, and even employee journalism have emerged in this era. Public Relations monitors not only offline and online news media but also social media. Public Relations 4.0 is the era of AI and big data. Public Relations does not only compete with Public Relations across organizations or across countries. In this era, Public Relations competes with robots that are not only able to write releases and schedule uploads of material but are also able to predict what strategic steps an organization needs to take regarding the phenomenon or issue that is happening (Arief, 2019).

Nevertheless, Agung Laksamana, Chairman of BPP Perhumas Indonesia, said that art, creativity, social responsibility, wisdom, and interpersonal relationships, cannot be replaced by robots. This is the advantage of Public Relations. In addition, Public Relations must also have a variety of skills related to technology in order to compete in the future. Apart from these skills, Public Relations is also required to be able to understand the impact of digital media and other technological applications on organizations and their brand reputation.

Digital Public Relations is a Public Relations activity that uses online digital media to manage and at the same time increase the reputation and understanding of an organization. In the era of Public Relations 4.0, the online platforms used were quite varied, from websites, YouTube channels, social media (for example, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to podcasts. The content in online platforms is also considered more interactive and diverse, highlighting the audio, visual, or both. Many private and government institutions and profit and non-profit organizations have used this type of content and online platforms as a medium for conducting Public Relations activities.

Digital Public Relations is increasingly popular as it has a number of advantages. Grunig proposed some of the advantages of digital media, including being effective in field observations; able to track problems and issues in the cyber world relatively easily; utilized to monitor SEO and content analysis, used as a database to measure the type and quality of trust-based relationships, equality in control, satisfaction, and commitment (Alexander, 2016). In addition, digital platforms have created new dynamic channels to sell products, create audiences, increase web traffic, and increase awareness of existing issues (Alexander, 2016). As a result, organizations with the Public Relations department are likely to use social media in their activities (Curtis, et al., 2010). The urgency of social media can also be seen from the fact that social media is the “newest hybrid element of the promotion mix” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Moreover, seeing the development of the digital world and social media, European Public Relations practitioners predict that communication content will be more important in the future than the means of communication used (Verhoeven, Tench, Zerfass, Moreno, & Vercic, 2011).

One platform that is often used in Digital Public Relations is social media. In the context of Public Relations, Kent defined social media as various interactive communication channels that allow interaction and feedback in both directions (Carr & Hayes, 2015). Not only ended the age of one-way messaging, but social media also forced businesses to engage with their audiences in a whole new way (Gillin, 2009). Social media is also considered a trademark of a vibrant and transparent communication strategy that allows the organization to interact, get engaged, and build relationships with the public (Graham & Avery, 2013). This advantage is used by various institutions, including government institutions. One example is the Indonesian Ministry of Finance which utilizes social media platforms to disseminate information while increasing

public trust (Arisanty, Wiradharma, & Fiani, 2020).

As a relatively new media, social media brought a significant shift towards Public Relations practice. Social media has provided an opportunity to really put the public in Public Relations by providing a mechanism for organizations to engage in real-time one-on-one conversations with officeholders (Wright & Hinson, 2008). From interviews with 25 executive public relations practitioners, it was found that apart from ‘getting into important conversations’, organizations also use social media to increase understanding of the market, consumers, competitors, and employees (DiStaso, McCorkindale, & Wright, 2011). In this sense, social media is considered an effective way to achieve research targets and organizational dialogue, especially from a financial perspective. Case studies on the relationship between Twitter use and institutional image show that companies that use social media for two-way communication with the public receive fewer negative mentions than those that do not (Wigley & Lewis, 2012). The view of the popularity of Digital Public Relations from another perspective states that public relations practitioners with high levels of social media use are more calculated representatives in an organization (Moreno, Navarro, Tench, & Zerfass, 2015).

On the other hand, there are interesting views about the existence of Digital Public Relations under the umbrella of Public Relations in the future. It is very important for Public Relations practitioners in the future to have a deep understanding of digital technology, including how it can be used (Alexander, 2016). A communication specialist should not only see this new technology as a sales tool. However, one must also consider how this technology can be used in more “influential” activities, such as building relationships, solving problems, crowdsourcing, and improving design quality (Alexander, 2016). However, the results of interviews with 21 public relations practitioners in Singapore and Perth show that the core of public relations remains in the activities of counseling, building relationships, and building community groups, where digital platforms are public relations tools in carrying out these activities (Wolf & Archer, 2018).

Study in Public Relations has been evolving in the last decades. A number of academics from various parts of the world had recorded this particular evolution. Early studies about digital Public Relations focused mainly on the description of the matter itself, which gradually shifted to theorization (Huang, Wu, & Huang, 2017). Those previous studies mostly implemented the Excellence theory of Public Relations (Grunig, 1992), focusing more on the organization’s point of view and how Public Relations excell their roles and values. This theory application was then dominated by Dialogic theory (Kent & Taylor, 1998) in the following years. The dialogic theory was seen as more relevant to Public Relations practice, especially in relation to this digital era, where public and organizations have never been more connected than ever before. This theory conveys the dialogic relationship between public and organizations in internet era, including dialogic loop, the usefulness of information, return visits generation, interface ease, and visitors conservations (Kent & Taylor, 1998).

The evolution of theory and practice of Public Relations does not stop there. Other scholars found the existence of parallels, intersections, and contrasts between Public Relations and communication literature paradigm, at least from their engagement and participation trends, issues management, and practitioner roles and training (VanDyke & Lee, 2020). Echoing this, Buchi and Trench proposed the third type of public engagement following the Dialogic model, namely Participation (VanDyke & Lee,

2020). This represents a deeper public engagement in multi-way communication rather than just two-way communication. This then developed even more into an approach to process multiple perspectives that existed in this vast information era, said Akin & Scheufele, on 'how to convey scientific information best, how the public interprets that particular information and related sociopolitical dynamics' (VanDyke & Lee, 2020). The continuing development and evolution of Public Relations theory and practice require proper adaptation from all practitioners as well as scholars and academic side.

The role of academic institutions is certainly needed to meet the needs of Public Relations practitioners, both in government and private institutions. In at least the last ten years, fundamental changes have occurred rapidly in various sectors, including business, media, and communications (Flynn, 2014). These sectors create a need for Public Relations practitioners with new competencies and knowledge, especially related to digital literacy. This is because digital citizenship is associated with self-efficacy of internet use and internet anxiety (Choi, Glassman, & Cristol, 2017). In this digital era, a communicator is at the forefront of greater organizational transparency, globalization of products and services, the explosion of social media channels, data, information, and the tremendous noise created by the internet. With proper digital literacy skills, a Public Relations practitioner is considered to carry out his role well.

Unfortunately, many practitioners working in Public Relations do not possess specific education or training in Public Relations (Wright, 2011). Formal education at universities is expected to answer this demand by providing Public Relations graduates who can compete in the digital world. Related to this, social media competence with digital citizenship must be considered by researchers and practitioners when compiling educational programs, developing curricula, and designing pedagogies to increase digital citizenship in university students (Xu, Yang, MacLeod, & Zhu, 2018). In addition, there is also a need for intercultural competencies to be included in the Public Relations education curriculum, both an understanding of cultural differences and how these differences are addressed in a professional context (Fitch & Desai, 2012).

The need for digital public relations has been seen in various parts of the world. The trend of Public Relations in Sydney, for example, is already based on digital communication (Alexander, 2016). In practice, traditional media has not entirely disappeared. However, this medium is used only in tiny portions. In this regard, research results in the UK and Australia also show that companies expect future Public Relations graduates to understand digital concepts that can increase productivity, increase innovation, offer financial effectiveness, as well as improve relationships with officeholders, consumers, suppliers, employees, government, and existing communities (Alexander, 2016). These facts show the urgent need for graduates with the knowledge and digital communication skills in the future.

Considering the continuous change of Public Relations theories (Huang, Wu, & Huang, 2017) and practices (Arief, 2019; VanDyke & Lee, 2020), there is an urgency to understand the current digital Public Relations trend as well as the skills needed by its practitioners (Flynn, 2014; Alexander, 2016). Understanding these matters would ease higher educational institutions in preparing their graduates in this field. Being aware of the matter would also help the existing related parties to adjust themselves to the current trend. Hence, this research aims to map digital public relations trends and investigate the digital public relations competencies needed.

Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to answer the research questions. Qualitative was chosen because it “properly seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings” (Berg, 2009). Data was collected through online interviews with public relations practitioners. Invitations to participate as a respondent of the study were sent via e-mail and followed up by private messages to schedule the interview. Interviews were conducted during September and October 2020.

As many as ten (10) public relations practitioners from various institutions were interviewed regarding the current Public Relations trends, their experiences and views on digital Public Relations, and the competence of Public Relations needed in this era. The practitioners chosen either possessed roles in an institutions’ Public Relations divisions, had a career in this area of expertise or were part of digital Public Relations agencies. The list of the interviewees can be seen in Table 1.

Tabel 1. List of interviewees

No.	Name	Company/Institution
1.	Intan Nugraheni	PLN Jakarta
2.	Maryanto	BNPB
3.	Restu Ema Nuraini	The Atrium Hotel and Resort Yogyakarta
4.	Ega Zulfikar	Universitas Gadjah Mada
5.	Jojo S. Nugroho	Imogen PR
6.	Ichwan Sitorus	sprout.co.id
7.	Dian Aris Maulana	PR Indonesia
8.	Alia Mirza Fatmala	Great Digital Media
9.	Akbar Faisal	Eksperia.id
10.	Khairul Anwar	Independent PR practitioner

The interviews were conducted via video conference calls recorded with the respondents’ consent for the analysis purpose. On average, the interview lasted for one hour. The data from the interview results were then analyzed using a thematic analysis technique. Open coding was also used to identify the appeared themes and potential categories. This was then compiled in highlights to simplify and see the Public Relation trends and the competencies needed. The general flow of this research can be seen in Figure 1.

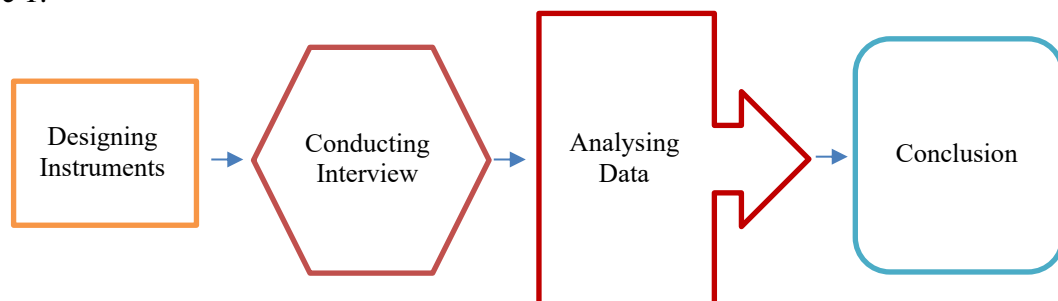


Figure 1. Research Flow

Results and Discussion

Trends in Public Relations

It cannot be denied that the trend of Public Relations changes throughout the times from the conventional 1.0 to the digital-AI-based 4.0 (Arief, 2019). Although the core function is still the same, Public Relations is now more dynamic with more diverse platforms and media. From the interviews with several Public Relations practitioners, some differences in conventional and digital Public Relations can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Differences between Conventional and Digital Public Relations (PR)

No	Conventional PR	Digital PR
1.	Using conventional media.	Using online media (website, social media).
2.	Language follows PUEBI and journalistic rules.	Language is more flexible depending on the target audience.
3.	Public relations activities are carried out directly.	Public relations activities can be done virtually.
4.	Relatively more expensive and time-consuming.	More effective and efficient.
5.	Measuring campaign success requires more effort.	Measuring campaign success is relatively easy.
6.	The target coverage is relatively narrow.	The target coverage can be very broad.

The first difference is the communication media used. Conventional Public Relations uses conventional media (Arief, 2019).

“...the platforms used are magazines, newspapers, books, encyclopedias, televisions, radios, and billboards. On the other hand, digital PR uses social media, Linkedin, search engines, influencers, messengers, and yahoo.” (K. Anwar, personal communication, September 15, 2020)

Echoing this, Grunig mentioned that these interactive internet media allow Public Relations to engage more while building a deeper relationship, both internal and external (Alexander, 2016). The second difference is related to the writing style used in communication, to the public in particular.

“Conventional PR writing uses General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) as well as other journalistic writing styles. Meanwhile, digital PR writing is not formal since its following youth trend.” (R. E. Nuraini, personal communication, September 5, 2020)

Conventional Public Relations tend to be more formal since they follow PUEBI and journalistic writing styles. Therefore, it is different from digital Public Relations, which is more dynamic in using the language depending on the target audience and atmosphere one would create. The third difference relates to the public relations activities carried out.

“In conventional PR, PR practitioners have direct interaction with the media, while digital PR use media social instead.” (I. Sitorus, personal communication, September 8, 2020)

In conventional Public Relations, public relations activities are carried out directly. The public relations activities in question include the negotiation process, planning, coordination, activity execution, monitoring, and evaluation. The entire process and/or activities are carried out face to face directly or through offline media. On the other hand, digital Public Relations maximizes online media in carrying out Public Relations activities.

The fourth difference between conventional and digital Public Relations lies in their effectiveness and efficiency. In terms of time, energy, and even funds spent, digital Public Relations is seen as more efficient than conventional Public Relations. In the negotiation process, for example, Public Relations requires time-consuming bureaucracy.

“Conventional PR, like using billboards, are more expensive. Digital platforms are cheaper and more effective since they allow us to choose our target audience.” (A. M. Fatmala, personal communication, September 11, 2020)

Using conventional media such as television and billboards is quite expensive compared to digital platforms, many of which are available free of charge. The platform can also be adjusted to the target audience, from age category, gender, and even interests. The digital monitoring process is relatively easier and faster than conventional Public Relations. The fifth difference is related to the effort to measure the success of the campaign.

“In conventional PR, it takes at least a survey to determine the level of success of a campaign.” (K. Anwar, personal communication, September 15, 2020)

This manual survey is certainly less efficient than digital features. The digital features can be used for the same purpose with instant results, which can even be checked in real-time, whether using analytics features offered by the platform and/or using more comprehensive measuring tools.

The sixth difference between conventional and digital Public Relations is related to the campaign's target coverage. Conventional Public Relations campaign targets are usually still relatively narrow.

“Billboard is not effective nowadays. Not many people pay attention to billboards.” (A. M. Fatmala, personal communication, September 11, 2020)

Considering that the process is quite draining and time-consuming, one Public Relations product can often only target certain parties or communities. As Grunig argued, in contrast to digital Public Relations, the convenience that social media offers allow the achievement of a relatively broader target depending on the strategy being carried out (Alexander, 2016).

Even though they are considered less effective and efficient, all respondents in this study agreed that conventional Public Relations is still considered relevant. Conventional and digital Public Relations are like a pair of legs since both must function correctly and able to work together to walk perfectly (K. Anwar, personal communication, September 15, 2020). Although conventional media is no longer as popular as several years ago, some people, especially the baby boomers, still access these media as sources of information. Conventional media such as newspapers and radio are still considered to have higher credibility than online media (Wright & Hinson, 2010). The inaccessibility of all circles of society by digital media is also considered to cause conventional Public Relations to be still relevant today.

It can be said that the existence of both conventional and digital Public Relations are important in an institution. The two are needed in accordance with their respective functions and portions. Given this, the necessity to migrate from conventional Public Relations to digital cannot be denied. However, there is no need to completely shift to digital Public Relations since the core of Public Relations remains on the communication and building relationships among related parties (Wolf & Archer, 2018). On the other hand, the proportion of both conventional and digital media itself depends on who is the target of communication. Knowing who the targets are to be reached, suitable media and strategies can then be selected and used to reach these parties.

Public Relations Competence

One of the responsibilities of Public Relations is to elevate their institution to be known well both internally and by the public. One of the efforts is to create public relations products. From the results of interviews with a number of Public Relations practitioners, the products in question are of various types, such as releases, press conferences, speeches from leaders, company profiles, video clips, audio, advertisements, website, and social media content, campaigns, events, booklets, flyers, souvenirs, to annual reports. Concerning these Public Relations products, a Public Relations practitioner is required to play a role in the planning process, including presentations in front of related parties, budget preparation, socialization, execution, monitoring, facing and resolving crises, and evaluation. Even during the process, Public Relations does not work alone but needs to coordinate with almost all divisions within the institution, from the marketing division, HR, accounting, engineering, and others. From this, it can be seen that in order to be able to do their job properly, both directly related to Public Relations products and the process of making these products, communication skills are the most critical competencies that a Public Relations practitioner needs to have (Wolf & Archer, 2018). Communication skills, along with other competencies required by Public Relations, can be seen in Figure 2.

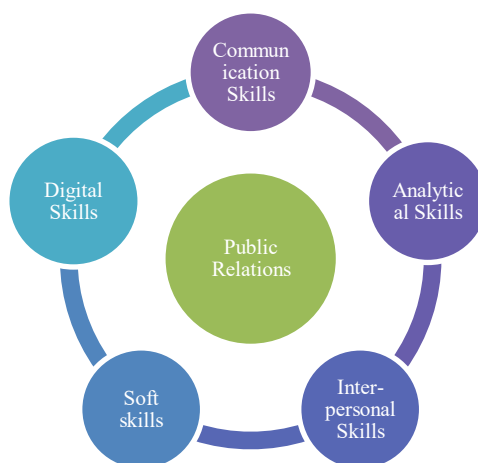


Figure 2. Public Relations Competencies

Figure 2 shows that in addition to communication skills, Public Relations practitioners need to have other abilities such as analytical skills, interpersonal skills, several other soft skills, and digital abilities. In detail, these competencies are described in the following.

Communication Skills

Public Relations is the main agent of any institution to communicate with both internal and public (Mahendra, 2020). To carry out this communication function, of course, communication skills are the main asset for Public Relations practitioners. This communication skill includes oral and written communication. In detail, the communication skills, both oral and written, needed by a Public Relations practitioner can be seen in Figure 3.

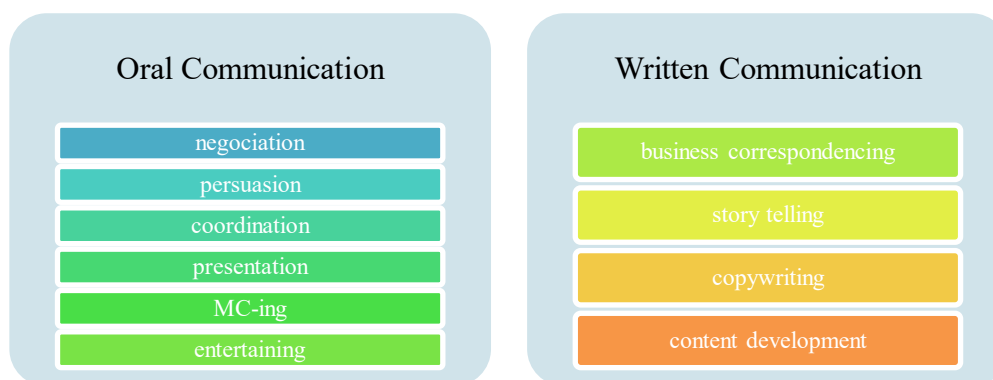


Figure 3. Communication Skills Needed by Public Relations Practitioners

From interviews with a number of Public Relations practitioners, the oral communication required is a set of public speaking skills that include negotiation, persuasion, coordination, and presentation skills. This capability is indispensable when compiling, executing, and evaluating public relations products. Apart from these skills, there are other oral communication skills needed, such as being a Master of Ceremony (MC) and the ability to entertain. Both of these abilities are to support the execution of other public relations products, for example, during a public relations event.

Furthermore, one of the written skills needed by a Public Relations practitioner is related explicitly to business correspondence. This skill is necessary, especially during the coordination both within and between institutions. In government institutions, for example, when the bureaucracy still plays an important role in coordination, a Public Relations practitioner is required to carry out good business correspondence. If not, this can create a bad reputation for the company, considering that Public Relations carries the image of the institution it represents. Other written communication skills needed are storytelling, copywriting, to content development, both for websites and various types of social media.

A Public Relations practitioner must be able to communicate the message that is carried very well.

“They must be able to translate and package the intended message in such a way and into various media with a variety of different audiences.” (Maryanto, personal communication, September 21, 2020)

This requires excellent writing skills. From a good press release to a good Instagram post and caption, even until a remarkable narration in a company profile video, a Public Relation practitioner must able to deliver the message while considering various aspects, like company culture and ideology, audience background, key message, persona, and so on.

Analytical Skills

In creating public relations products to enhance the good image of the institution, a Public Relations practitioner needs good analytical skills. This competency is needed, especially in formulating and determining the right strategy to achieve the maximum expected results.

“They need to be able to build a communication strategy.” (J. S. Nugroho, personal communication, October 8, 2020)

In producing an excellent strategic plan, research is needed. This requires analytical skills supported by critical thinking skills, as illustrated in Figure 4.

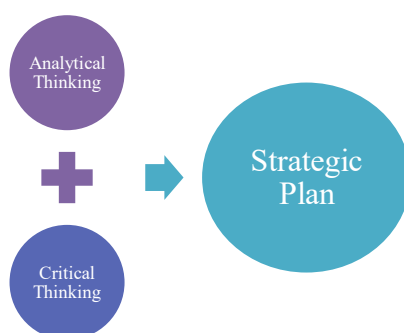


Figure 4. Analytical Skills Needed by Public Relations Practitioners

When a Public Relations practitioner has good analytical skills, they will be able to observe ongoing trends, determine what should be done or should be avoided, determine who should be involved, what, when, how a plan should be implemented or even changed, compile priority scale, and others. It is also urgent to possess this skill since PR practitioners nowadays have to compete with AI (Arief, 2019). This capability is one of the success factors of a public relations product that can run well while achieving the specified target or not.

Interpersonal Skills

Public Relations practitioners almost certainly work in teams. Therefore, they are required to have good interpersonal skills. This ability includes leadership, people management, and emotional management, as seen in Figure 5.

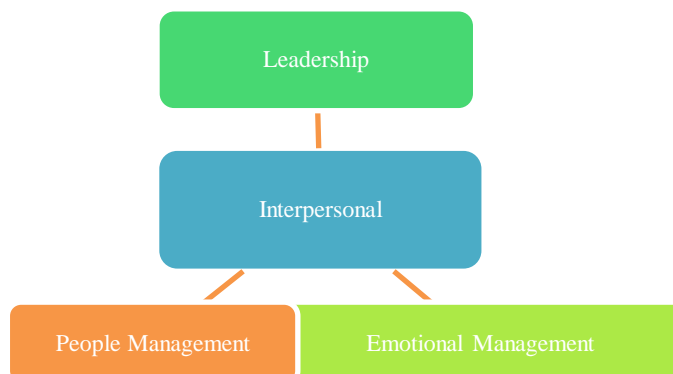


Figure 5. Interpersonal Skills Needed by Public Relations Practitioners

Leadership skills are not only needed for leaders in an institution, both from a division and institutional leaders in general. This competency is required by all parts of the institution, including Public Relations. Without good leadership skills, they will find it challenging to lead themselves and others on their team. This also happens to people management and emotional management. These two abilities also determine the success of work in the team. By having good interpersonal skills, besides showing a good image for the institution they represent, a Public Relations practitioner will also determine the team's success in implementing the public relations programs they have compiled.

Other Softskills

Other soft skills are also needed by Public Relations practitioners to be able to carry out their duties well.

"They should have good communication skills, self-confidence, good attitude, creative, and knowledgeable." (R. E. Nuraini, personal communication, September 5, 2020)

Being initiative, responsive, flexible, and broad-minded are also needed. These abilities can strengthen their position both when communicating with the public and internal institutions. In addition, they are also required to have good crisis management skills. Of course, this capability is very much needed, especially when they have to represent institutions at times when their position is less profitable.

Digital Skills

In implementing Digital Public Relations, a Public Relations practitioner is required to have digital capabilities (Alexander, 2016), at least knowing and being familiar with the features offered in online media, both websites and social media. By having this knowledge, Public Relations practitioners are expected to be able to take advantage of the features in the related online platform to maximize their strategic plans for the institution, both in the manufacturing process, monitoring, and evaluating the Digital Public Relations products, they make (Moreno, Navarro, Tench, & Zerfass, 2015).

Apart from knowledge of the online platform and its features, a Public Relations practitioner is also expected to have the ability to produce digital content.

"... multimedia content development, data analytic, crisis management, verbal communication, and storytelling." (J. S. Nugroho, personal communication, October 8, 2020)

Some institutions may have separate budgets, hiring professionals to produce digital content for Public Relations activities and/or campaigns, including monitor the content created. However, it is possible that at certain times, when a fast response with limited personnel is needed, a Public Relations is required to create content for the digital platform itself. For this, at least they have abilities such as graphic design, photography, videography, and editing skills.

Conclusion

In the era where information goes rapidly through social media platforms, it has become a norm to think that the role of conventional Public Relations would be all replaced by digital engagements. In fact, practitioners believe that traditional communication and analytical skills still prevail over the digitally transformed Public Relations landscape. In the end, the digital platform has become another tool in

storytelling and conveying the message. Therefore, higher educational institutions should gear towards effective communication skills, regardless of their conventionality, while strengthening the mastery of digital platforms. This way, the use of digital media can be treated as an obligatory skill-set to devise the main goal of Public Relations practices.

Based on the interviews, a Public Relations practitioner is a communicator as well as the face of the institution they represent. To be able to carry out their functions properly, they are required to have excellent communication, interpersonal, writing, analytical thinking, and related soft skills. Regarding digital Public Relations, a Public Relations practitioner is expected to have proper knowledge of the digital platform and its features. This is so they can maximize the strategies they compile, especially for Digital Public Relations products. In addition, they are also expected to have basic skills to produce digital content, such as graphic design, photography, videography, and editing.

In its preliminary form, this research demystified the initial assumptions on how technological advancement interacts with conventional Public Relations. It brought a more precise understanding, based on the needs stated by the practitioners, on how to formulate an up-to-date curriculum for a higher educational institution in training their future Public Relations practitioners. Based on this, a more thorough investigation can be carried out further to design a more detailed teaching and training material.

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